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THE PLACE OF REASON IN CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC

THE PLACE OF REASON IN CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC

FOUR LECTURES DELIVERED BEFORE THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK. TOGETHER WITH A PAPER ON EXPERIENCE, RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE, BY

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PREFACE

The following pages are the result of an invitation to give a short course of lectures at the General Theological Seminary in New York. That invitation gave me an opportunity to attempt to sketch certain lines of thought which have been the chief interest of my mind for some years. I am well aware that the canvas on which I have been working is far too small for any adequate treatment of the subject with which I have tried to deal, especially in the concluding lecture. If time and circumstances permit I hope in the coming years to devote myself to the working out in greater detail of the arguments which are here so briefly suggested.

I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to Dean Fosbrooke and all those members of the General Theological Seminary whose invitation has encouraged me to prepare these lectures, whose hospitality I am now enjoying in anticipation as I write, and shall have enjoyed in fact before these words are published. I must also thank the Editor of the *Interpreter* for permission to reprint the appended Paper on 'Christian Experience,' and the Rev. F. H. Brabant, of Wadham College, for his kindness in reading the proofs for publication.

L. H.

Oxford.
8th December, 1924.

The Place of Reason in Christian Apologetic

I.

IN 1923 Dr. Gore published the concluding volume of his trilogy on *The Reconstruction of Belief*, and early in the following year a somewhat surprising review of that work appeared in the London *Church Times*. The reviewer, while faintly praising Dr. Gore for the skill with which he had constructed a reasoned *apologia* for the Christian faith, devoted most of his space to elaborating the point that such labour was wasted time and energy. The Christians of the twentieth century, he urged, had grown out of the rationalistic age in which Dr. Gore still dwelt; they had learned that religion neither could nor need have any rational justification, but has its own canons and is its own justification. Reference was made to Dr. Rudolf Otto of Marburg, whose work *Das Heilige*[1] had been issued in an English translation in 1923,[2] as the master at whose feet this lesson had been learned.[3]

This review did not attract much notice. No one troubled to waste powder and shot over what was apparently the work of a 'man of straw.' But straw may be useful to show which way the wind is blowing, and such a review, though unimportant in itself, may

[1] Breslau, 1917.

[2] Otto: *The Idea of the Holy*. (Oxford University Press, 1923.)

[3] *The Church Times*, Vol. XCI., No. 3188. (London: G. J. Palmer & Sons, Ltd. Feb. 29, 1924.)

have importance as a symptom of the effect produced by Dr. Otto's book. I propose, therefore, to pass from pupil to master and to consider briefly whether *The Idea of the Holy* has sounded the death-knell of rational apologetic.

We will begin our examination of Dr. Otto's work with the latter part of his book, in which he uses the word 'divination' to denote man's faculty for recognising the divine in its manifestations of itself, and maintains that this is an *a priori* faculty.[1] He carefully explains what he means by that statement. It is not that every man does, as a matter of fact, exercise this power of recognition, but that in every man, *qua* man, there is the potentiality of the exercise of this power, although it is actualized in some more than others.[2] He illustrates his meaning by reference to the aesthetic faculty, where similarly all men have a potentiality which in some is actualized in appreciation of beauty and in others rises to the level of the creative artist. Parallel to that insight through which man can appreciate beauty is the insight through which he can recognize the 'numinous,' or the self-manifestation of the divine. It is this which he calls 'divination.'

What has chiefly impressed Dr. Otto in the aesthetic faculty and has led him to draw this parallel is, I think, its *immediacy*. The artist's appreciation of beauty is not the application of a system of rules or

[1] *Op. cit.* Chapters XVIII–XXI. (The references throughout are to the English Translation.)

[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 181-2. Cp. pp. 116-120.

canons, but an immediate act of insight of which no analysis can be given and which cannot be defined in terms of anything other than itself. If asked by another to explain why he has said ' This is beautiful ' the artist is ultimately driven to say, ' Look ! Can't you see it for yourself ? If not, no words of mine can show it to you. They may be able to help you to see what I see as I see it, but only when you see it for yourself will you really understand what I meant.' Now before we go any further in the examination of Dr. Otto's book, I would ask you to consider very carefully whether what is here said about aesthetic appreciation is not equally true both of moral judgement and of the intellectual apprehension of truth. Neglecting for the moment the former of these, we will concentrate our attention on the latter.

To many minds the phrase ' the exercise of reason ' often seems to suggest a process of some appreciable length, in which the mind is forging a chain of argument, dealing the while with more or less clearly defined concepts. The obvious example would be the classic syllogism in which the mind, dealing with the concepts Socrates, manhood, and mortality, argues, ' All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal.' But let us look at this argument more closely and ask precisely how the conclusion is arrived at. Surely the only possible account of the matter is this : we must have the two premisses simultaneously before our mind, and then, by an immediate act of insight (parallel to the artist's ' This is beautiful ') we see that the conclusion is

involved in them. If similarly we ask how the premisses were established, we shall find that for each there must have been ultimately one or more such immediate acts of apprehension. The fact surely is that the primary function of human reason is not the construction of chains of argument, but the *recognition of truth*. Definitions may help, chains of argument may help—they are the marshalling of further material for insight in order that it may be presented to the mind—but these depend for their existence on prior immediate acts of recognition of truth, and only exist in order to make possible further acts of the same nature.

But, it may be said, if we are to accept as our definition of reason that it is the power to recognise truth when presented to the mind, does not this presuppose our ability to answer the age-old question 'What is truth?' 'What,' you may say, 'is your definition of truth?' I answer that there can be no such definition, for a simple and adequate reason. To define a thing is to describe it in terms of something other than itself. When we see that, we see that if anything is ultimate it is for that very reason indefinable, for its ultimateness (if I may coin the word) implies that there is nothing else in terms of which it can be described. To anyone who asked me to define 'truth,' I should reply, 'I cannot define truth, but you know as well as I what I mean by the word; you could not argue with me unless you did.' Let me show you what I mean by a simple illustration. Let us suppose that I gave as an illustration of what is

true the statement 'The shortest distance between two points is the straight line joining them,' and that a man to whom I gave that instance objected that owing to the researches of Dr. Einstein that statement could no longer be accepted as true. His objection would surely involve as clear an appreciation of the distinction between truth and falsehood in his mind as I had in mine.

All argument, indeed all rational thought, presupposes the existence of truth and on the part of man the power to discover it. Dr. Otto would, I understand from his book, agree with this, and also with the further assertion that man has parallel powers of apprehending right and wrong in moral judgements and beauty and ugliness in aesthetic.[1] The further question arises whether the exercise of these powers is the recognition of truth, goodness and beauty objectively existent and presented to the mind, or the creation, the objectifying of a threefold content of the mind itself. This latter theory, if I understand him rightly, is the teaching of the Italian philosopher Croce. Either theory is a possible account of the activity of the human mind: what is at issue is the nature of what we should commonly call the objects of our experience. In the one case they would, in Dr. Otto's language, merely supply a stimulus to the mind, provoking it, so to speak, to put forth its hidden treasures. In the other they would have what I may perhaps call a sacramental reality, being particulars in and through which the universals truth, beauty,

[1] Cp. *op. cit.* pp. 44, 116 ff, 179 ff.

and goodness are revealed to and recognised by the human mind. I may as well say at once that I am myself convinced of the truth of this latter way of looking at things, and that the specific activity of the human mind is the recognition of the universals truth, beauty, and goodness in the particular instances of them presented in this changing world in time and space; but I am not sure that Dr. Otto is not right in attempting to combine both theories, and to see in the life of the human mind both a recognition of objective manifestations of God and an unfolding of the *Spiritus sanctus internus*, or, if I may say so, the Logos, the 'Light which lighteneth every man coming into the world.'[1] In passing, let me remark that I find his exposition of his twofold point of view in this respect one of the most difficult things in Dr. Otto's book. I cannot see that he has provided any criterion by which to distinguish between *mere* stimuli of the faculty of divination, and veritable manifestations of 'the numinous.' But I shall have to say more of this later on.[2]

One further point. If the immediate apprehension of truth is the primary activity of reason, and if ultimates are indefinable, then the *highest* activity of reason is the immediate intuition of the indefinable. It is thus that traditionally the rational activity of God is described as apprehension of the *totum simul*.

We can now proceed with our examination of Dr. Otto's work. He would agree with me, I take it, in holding that these three powers of apprehending

[1] St. John i. 9.

[2] See below, pp. 10, 26.

truth, beauty and goodness are native to the human mind. The aim of his book is to go further and to ascribe also to the human mind a fourth power parallel to these, the power of 'divining the numinous.' The earlier part of the book is devoted to describing what he means by 'the numinous.' It is that element in things which produces in us an eerie sensation of being in the presence of something at once mysterious, aweful, and fascinating. It is in such sensations that the divine is specifically manifested, and it is such sensations which are the essence of religion.[1] These manifestations are manifestations of a non-rational element in things, and the activity of 'divination' is a non-rational activity.[2] The religious life of man is, therefore, autonomous, immune from rational criticism and incapable of rational justification.[3]

Now what, precisely, does Dr. Otto mean by 'non-rational'? There seem to be two strands in the texture of his definition: according to one, anything which cannot be defined is non-rational,[4] according to the other the mark of the non-rational is that it produces in the mind an emotion and not a concept.[5] I have called these two strands, but I am not sure that Dr. Otto would agree with this, for he seems to me to confuse the non-definable with the emotional, to hold that unless and until a thing is defined it cannot be said to be rationally appre-

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 4, 6, 58, 72-112 (especially pp. 99-100), 120, 128-9, 135, 144-6.

[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 2, 5, 60, 113-4 etc.; 147-178.

[3] *Op. cit.* pp. 175-8.

[4] *Op. cit.* pp. 1, 5, 60-1.

[5] *Op. cit.* pp. 8-10, 140.

hended.[1] But if, as we have seen, it is the mark of all ultimates, even those which are the objects of reason in the narrowest sense of the word, to be indefinable, we cannot admit that 'the numinous' is non-rational simply because it is indefinable. We turn our attention, then, to its other characteristic, its being a matter of emotion. Let us grant that Dr. Otto has made a valuable contribution to religious thought in the elaborate care with which he has isolated and analysed certain specific emotions of wonder, awe, and fascination. The question remains, how far is he justified in arguing from these to a non-rational element in reality which is specifically divine?

A non-rational element in reality: what precisely does this mean? It is very difficult to answer this question. An illustration may help to make clear what is involved. A man may do something non-rational, may act in a way which he himself would describe as non-rational, or even irrational; for example, speak abusively to a friend as a result of being in a bad temper. Here we have an action which is non-rational as being the result of a non-rational emotion. But we do not look on either the action or the emotion as having no rational relation to the rest of the universe. There must have been something to account for the man's fit of temper, some annoying piece of news, or an unhealthy condition of his liver. A non-rational act is not an act of which no rational account can be given, but an act whose proximate source is to be found not in a rational

[1] See, *e.g. op. cit.* pp. 1-4, 140-1, 174.

determination but in a wave of non-rational emotion. Now what Dr. Otto argues for is a something in reality which is indefinable and produces in man an emotional response, something which is felt rather than rationally apprehended. But does he mean to maintain that that something stands itself in no rational connection with the rest of reality, that it is, so to speak, a gap—or rather many gaps—in the cosmos of the universe? I am afraid he does, for that seems to be necessary in order to make possible his favourite metaphor of reality as a fabric of rational and non-rational interwoven as warp and woof,[1] his whole theory of the schematization of the non-rational by the rational,[2] and his claim for religion to be beyond rational criticism or justification.[3]

But surely, the presupposition of all thought is the universe as a rational whole. If there be any ultimately non-rational elements in it, any such gaps in its rational completeness, we have not a cosmos but a chaos, and it is futile for Dr. Otto or anyone else to attempt to maintain or refute any thesis whatsoever. There are passages in *The Idea of the Holy* which seem to show that Dr. Otto is not altogether comfortable about the use of the term 'non-rational,'[4] and I cannot help thinking that he has been misled by his unfortunate identification of the non-rational with the indefinable. The term 'non-rational' is, it seems to me, used equivocally in his book. Having established the existence of a non-rational something

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 47, 120, 146.
[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 46 ff, 144 ff.
[3] *Op. cit.* pp. 176-8.
[4] *Op. cit.* pp. 60-1, 179.

in the sense of something emotionally apprehended or indefinable, he then slips into using the term as meaning that of which no rational account can be given and which has no rational connection with the rest of the universe.

This unfortunate identification of the indefinable with the non-rational is the reason why, as I mentioned earlier, Dr. Otto does not seem to be able to provide any criterion to distinguish between false and true manifestations of 'the numinous.'[1] What I cannot but think to be his error is illustrated in a striking passage.[2] When Plato in the second book of the Republic lays down his τυποὶ περὶ θεολογίας, when Amos declares the righteousness of Jahweh, we have what I should call clear instances of rational insight, we have historically, in Greek and Hebrew thought respectively, the birth of rational religion. But for Dr. Otto these declarations are non-rational, being, as he puts it, '*felt* as something axiomatic, something whose inner necessity we feel to be self-evident.' It is because I think that his substitution of the word 'felt' for such a phrase as 'seen by rational insight' is the key to what is unsatisfactory in his book that I have troubled you with the somewhat dry logical discussion which occupied the earlier portion of this lecture.

There are, then, certain immediate acts of rational apprehension which, on account of their immediacy, Dr. Otto is misled into calling non-rational. But to have perceived this is not to have disposed

[1] See above, p. 6 and below p. 26. [2] *Op. cit.* pp. 140 ff.

altogether of his ' divination of the numinous.' There remain those elements in consciousness which he has so carefully described, which are genuinely not acts of rational apprehension, but emotional states, the states of wonder, awe, and fascination. What account shall we give of these, if we reject the theory that they are non-rational apprehensions of a non-rational element in the objective world ?

Over and over again Dr. Otto attempts to elucidate what he means by ' divination of the numinous ' by illustrating it from aesthetic appreciation. It is easy to see why he chooses this illustration. In aesthetic appreciation we have an activity which *is* other than the rational apprehension of truth, but which makes an equal claim to apprehend an objective element in the universe, beauty. Now we cannot ignore the fact that the admission of the autonomy of the aesthetic faculty in its own sphere does not necessitate belief in a gap in the rational cosmos of the universe in order that it may be given a fitting object on which to exercise itself. The granting of this autonomy has forced thinkers to allow for and to try to account for the existence of beauty in the universe, and to some this has appeared as a strong contributory argument for belief in God.[1] It would be the suicide of thought to hold that the autonomy of the aesthetic faculty precludes the mind from any possibility of giving a rational account of its existence.

If, then, Dr. Otto has established the fact in human

[1] See, *e.g.*, C. J. Shebbeare: *The Challenge of the Universe.* (S.P.C.K., 1918.)

consciousness of an awareness of 'the numinous,' which is more akin to aesthetic appreciation than to the apprehension of truth, we need not postulate for its autonomy in its own sphere an impossibility of giving a rational account of it. We cannot excuse reason of the duty of enquiring whether such elements in consciousness are merely subjective illusions or true awareness of an objective element in reality, and, if it be the latter, of discovering its relation to the rest of the universe which, if we are to think at all, must be a rational whole.

We will now turn our attention to another point in *The Idea of the Holy*, to Dr. Otto's thesis that the objective 'numinous' is the specific manifestation of the divine, and that the awareness of it in human consciousness is the specifically religious element in the life of man. This provides at once a practical difficulty, for if what he says be true, then we must admit the existence of a class of men for whom no religion is possible, those who are not subject to these emotional experiences. Dr. Otto himself acknowledges the existence of such persons,[1] but he does not discuss the question whether or no they can be Christians. Neither do I wish now to discuss this practical question, but, having mentioned it, to consider directly the theory which gives rise to it.

There is an illuminating passage in Dr. Sorley's Gifford Lectures which here deserves our attention.[2]

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 53-6.

[2] Sorley: *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, 2nd edition, pp. 305-7. (Cambridge University Press, 1921.)

Dr. Sorley is considering the classical arguments for the existence of God. He points out the difference between the manner of approach to the question of God's being which was characteristic of the days in which those arguments were first framed, and that which is characteristic of our own days. Then it was assumed that we knew what was meant by the word 'God.' That word denoted a Being of certain definite characteristics, and the question was asked whether we could believe in the existence of such a Being. But now we start, as it were, from the other end. We try to understand the nature of the universe to which we belong, and then we ask whether the universe considered as a whole is such that we can ascribe to it such moral and personal characteristics as justify us in calling it God. This is a just and valuable observation, and it enables us at once to see the weak point in Dr. Otto's thesis. To assert that the manifestations of 'the numinous' are specifically the manifestations of the divine is to slip back into the mediaeval point of view and to ignore that method of putting the question of God's being which gives it meaning to-day.

A few years ago there died in Oxford a teacher of philosophy to whom I and many others owe more than we can express, Professor John Cook Wilson. In an account of his life and work published in *Mind* shortly after his death, Mr. H. A. Prichard refers in a footnote [1] to an occasion on which he read a paper

[1] *Mind*, N.S. Vol. XXVIII., No. 111, p. 305. (Macmillan & Co., July, 1919.)

arguing for belief in God from the existence in human consciousness of the specific emotion of reverence. That paper has not, so far as I know, been published, and I was not myself fortunate enough to be present when it was read ; I only know of it at second hand from some of the hearers in whose memory it has dwelt. I mention this paper, because from all accounts it must have been a striking anticipation of the contribution which Dr. Otto seems to me to have made to Christian apologetics, an anticipation made by one who would have repudiated entirely the suggestion that religious faith is above rational criticism or justification. It is one thing to say that the universe, considered as a whole, contains elements which justify us in speaking of God ; it is another to say that God is specifically the non-rational element in reality who cannot be the object of rational thought. The former I believe to have been the argument of Professor Cook Wilson ; the latter seems to me to be the position of Dr. Otto. If that is indeed what he means to maintain, then I cannot but think that it is an untenable position.

I have devoted this lecture to criticism of *The Idea of the Holy* because that book has been appealed to to justify the abandoning of any attempt at rational Christian apologetic. It seemed worth while to enquire whether, on investigation, Dr. Otto's work lays itself open to be appealed to in this manner, and if so, whether its authority can be accepted. We have seen that there are passages which deny the possibility of rational Christian apologetic, and

passages which seem to involve an impossible theory of gaps in the rational coherence of the universe. But these elements in Dr. Otto's thought we have found it necessary to reject, and it is precisely these which furnish the ground of appeal in the anti-rationalist cause. I should not like to close this lecture without a very sincere tribute to Dr. Otto, to the learning and insight displayed in his book, and to its importance. In drawing attention to a specific gamut of emotions which demand consideration as possibly direct awarenesses of an element in reality which is neither truth, goodness, nor beauty, and in the elaborate care with which he has isolated and analysed these emotions, Dr. Otto has provided the student of Christian apologetics with food for thought for which he must always be thankful. If by calling these emotions and their objects 'non-rational' Dr. Otto merely means that they are indefinable and matters of emotion, we need not quarrel with him. If he intends us to read this definition into the term whenever it occurs, as is suggested in one passage of his book,[1] then perhaps both his anti-rationalist disciple, and I, his critic, owe him apologies for having misunderstood him. But I do not think that this can be so. Dr. Otto himself seems to have his doubts. He seems to waver between holding that moral thought is rational and non-rational, between holding that the 'schematizing of the numinous,' as he calls it, by moral ideas is a rational and a non-rational process.[2] It seems to me that the truest account of

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 60, 61. [2] Compare *op. cit.* pp. 46, 50, 77-8, 114-5, 140-1.

this process would be to call it, not the schematizing of the numinous by moral ideas, but the predicating of both numinous and moral attributes of the same subject, the ultimate reality, God. And this must surely be the work of reason, and as such both subject to rational criticism and only tenable if rationally justified.

In conclusion, I should like to say a word about the function of Christian apologetics. Its aim is, surely, not to convert, but to justify conversion at the bar of reason. There are traces in Dr. Otto's book of confusion between the aims of the apologist and of the converting preacher.[1] Even if it be true that the aim of the latter must be to produce in others such emotional awareness as he experiences in his own consciousness, it does not follow that this is the whole duty of the former. The aim of the apologist must be to follow in the steps of the preacher, to reflect upon his work, and to consider whether the universe is such as to justify his faith and his works. This must be a rational enquiry conducted by rational methods.

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 7, 178.

II.

WE devoted our first lecture to an examination of the theory that what is specifically religious is subjectively a non-rational element in consciousness and objectively a non-rational element in reality, religious experience being a union of these in an activity called 'divination of the numinous.' As a result of that discussion we had better in this connection avoid the terms rational and non-rational, and say that 'divination of the numinous' means an emotional element in human consciousness bearing witness to a non-definable element in reality which can only thus, i.e. emotionally, be apprehended. We found it impossible to limit what we mean by 'God' to what is apprehended in this manner, and we found it impossible to accept any theory which implies what we called gaps in the rational coherence of the universe. Our first task now is to seek to determine as accurately as we can how far, and in what sense, that which is called emotional must therefore be described as non-rational.

We may surely in these days, without any laboured argument, agree to reject that so-called 'faculty psychology' for which the various elements in human consciousness are looked upon as functioning, so to speak, in watertight compartments. Man is a unity, and whether he be thinking, willing, or feeling it is the man as a whole who is engaged in each activity. We have no experience of what may be called an act

of pure sense-perception, but in our perceiving by the senses we are active as rational and conative beings, and what we perceive depends in a measure on the direction and the intensity of our attention as well as on the content and the rational character of our minds as we attend. Yet thought, will, and feeling are not the same; none of these activities can be reduced to, or defined in, terms of the others. We have each of us to recognise in himself a trinity in unity, a unity in which each element is absolutely distinct yet united in such a manner that there is an analogy to that 'interpermeation' which, according to traditional Christian doctrine, obtains between the Persons in the Divine Trinity.

It would surely be a falling back into that 'faculty psychology' of watertight compartments if we did not recognise the same unity of man when we think of him as metaphysician, as moralist, and as artist. The quest of truth, of goodness, and of beauty are distinct activities, none of which can be reduced to, or defined in terms of, the others; yet in whichever direction a man is engaged, it is the whole man who is active.

What I wish now to maintain is that what is here subjectively true of the man in his various activities is also true of that objective reality with which we believe him to be dealing. If truth, goodness, and beauty are constituent elements of the truly real, then, for the universe to be one—as it surely must be, if we are to think at all,—its unity must be a harmony of these three, a harmony in which each, though it

cannot be reduced to, or defined in terms of, the others, is yet not contradictory to the others.

Truth, beauty, and goodness are the terms commonly used in this connection, but there is a difficulty about the use of the world 'truth.' It is aptly predicated of statements, judgements, opinions, doctrines, and similar things which may be true or false, but it is not so easy to see precisely what is meant by the attribution of truth to the ultimate reality as by that of beauty and goodness. This difficulty has led Mr. Oliver Quick to suggest that we should do better to speak of *rationality*, goodness and beauty as being the ultimate elements of reality, whose harmonious unity I am here trying to maintain.[1] Rationality is that quality in the universe which makes it knowable, which makes it possible for there to be a truth about it. We will adopt this suggestion of Canon Quick's, and speak of rationality, goodness and beauty.

It is inconceivable that these should ultimately be contradictory. They are not to be confused: it is as futile to apply rational or moral criteria in questions of art as it is to apply aesthetic in questions of rationality. But the ultimate reality must be a harmonious unity of the three. What I want to suggest is that in this harmonious unity there is an analogy to that interpermeation which we find in the being of man and believe to obtain in the Divine Trinity; that though rationality is neither goodness nor beauty, it is yet both good and beautiful, and so

[1] See *The Hibbert Journal*, Vol. XXII. No. 1 (Oct. 1923), p. 127.

on with the other two. We need not, for the purpose of these lectures, discuss this thesis in all its bearings; we will confine ourselves to an attempt to shew that it is justifiable to speak both of goodness and of beauty as rational.

With regard to goodness our task is comparatively simple. It is not for nothing that Kant extends the use of the word 'reason' to cover judgments both of truth and of morals, speaking of 'speculative reason' and 'practical reason' respectively, or that the late Dean of Carlisle, Dr. Hastings Rashdall, has denied so convincingly that what we call conscience is merely an emotional faculty.[1] But perhaps the interpermeation of the good by the rational can most clearly be exhibited by reference to Greek moral thought, for example, the discussion of the nature of courage in Plato's *Republic*,[2] where courage is defined as the maintenance of the right opinion on what things are and are not to be feared, and that in Aristotle's *Ethics*, where courage is distinguished from cowardice and rashness.[3] It is perhaps a typical deficiency of the Englishman to minimise the importance of the rational element in matters of conduct; to respect a man for doing what he believes to be right, but to ignore the possibility of what he calls his conscience leading him astray through neglect of rational consideration of the circumstances of his case. Moral theology is a tree that has never flourished on English soil. Yet it is a tree whose leaves are needed for the

[1] *Is Conscience an Emotion?* (Houghton, 1914.) [2] *IV.* 420 c.d.
[3] *III.* 1115 a. ff.

healing of the nations, and must wither if the strain of rationality is allowed to die out from the stock.

To maintain the interpermeation of beauty by rationality is a less easy task, but I am indebted to Mr. C. J. Shebbeare for an illustration which shows that the suggestion of it is not without ground. It is possible to hum a few bars of music which any one of sufficient musical education will at once recognise as being characteristic of a certain composer, for example Handel. This involves the existence in art of generalisations, in the case suggested of what may be called a *Handelismus*. But surely the possibility of the formation of such general concepts involves the element of rationality in the sphere in which they obtain.

In my first lecture I indicated that the deepest conviction of my philosophical creed is that the ultimate reality is a harmony of rationality, goodness, and beauty, which are manifested to the human mind in particular instances of themselves in this world of time and space which has therefore what may be called a sacramental mode of reality.[1] What is specifically human is the recognition of these universals in particular instances, and in each exercise of such activity the man is a compound of reason, will, and feeling. Ideally the man would be a perfect unity, in which each element would be rightly functioning and rightly interpermeated by the others. But no one of us is a perfect man, neither is this world a perfect world. The result is that in actual experience our

[1] Above, p. 5.

activity is often discordant rather than harmonious, ourselves distracted rather than unified, whilst we have to deal with imperfect and fragmentary manifestations of rationality, goodness, and beauty in which these elements are imperfectly harmonised and interpermeated one with another. In the light of the considerations I have been putting before you let us now turn our attention directly to that element in our consciousness which we call emotional.

The more one tries to think out what is meant by such words as emotion, or feeling, the more difficult does the task become, and one is led to appreciate the remark of an eminent Oxford Philosopher that the word is used as a sort of receptacle to which may be consigned all elements in consciousness not otherwise accounted for. The chief difficulty is to find the common principle according to which the name feeling or emotion is bestowed. What, for example, is there in common between the use of the word to describe sense-perception and the use of it to describe such emotions as love and hate, fear and confidence? What is there in common between feeling the cold hardness of a stone, and feeling compassion at the sight of a suffering animal? Another very difficult question is that of the relation of feeling to cognition. Are feelings the children or the parents of cognitions? Sometimes they seem to be one, sometimes the other. For example, a man may receive a telegram telling him that he has failed in an examination, and may be rendered miserable by the news. On another occasion he may first just feel misery without knowing

why, failing to recognise the symptoms of a disordered liver. I cannot but think, I may remark in passing, that those psychologists who explain all theological doctrines as the rationalisation of emotions whose true cause is something very different, seem to me as a rule to lay too much stress on the latter type of experience and too little on the former, and to overlook this difficulty of the relation of feeling to cognition, in which sometimes the one and sometimes the other is the prior element in our experience.

The investigation of such problems as these is a task for which we have no time in these lectures, and, having noticed them, we must let them be. The point to which I wish to draw your attention is this. If man be a spiritual unity of reason, will, and feeling, then there is such interpermeation of these elements in his being that we cannot isolate each by itself and assert that where the one is there the others are not. If man be a rational being at all, then his feelings must be *as feelings* different from what they would be if he were not. They are the feelings of a rational being. When in any particular case they are not, that is not because they are more perfect as feelings, but because he is less perfectly rational; and that, as we have seen, is no uncommon fact among creatures so imperfect in every way as ourselves. Similarly a hard-headed rationalist may be deficient in feeling, but that does not in itself make his rationality any the better.

If this be so, then feelings themselves may be rational and irrational, and good and bad. We

cannot say that because a feeling is a feeling it is therefore futile to apply to it rational or moral predicates, to criticise or justify it on rational or moral grounds ; and if we find within ourselves, as unfortunately we often do, feelings which are unjustifiable on either or both of those grounds, then by the grace of God we must seek to transform them or to eradicate them from our lives, asking, in the traditional language of the Church, for a heart of flesh in place of a heart of stone.

It may be objected that it is an inevitable result of our being finite that each man, in order to make any progress, has to concentrate on one particular line of activity, remembering that as we are members one of another, no man can be the whole body. The classical illustration of this would be, I suppose, Darwin's regret that his devotion to scientific research had diminished his sensibility to music.[1] There is of course truth in this—though the many-sidedness of really great men should remind us that it may be exaggerated ; but the recognition of our limitations as finite beings must not blind us to the fact that they are limitations, and as such witness to regrettably necessary deficiencies in actual existence and not to an intrinsic incompatibility between reason, will and feeling. The man of thought, the man of action, and the artist should each recognise his own deficiencies, regret them, strive to remedy them so far as he can without deserting his own vocation, and welcome the contribution of the others to the life of the community.

[1] *Life*, Vol. I, pp. 100-2.

We have been thinking of rationality, goodness and beauty as the three elements in the ultimate reality which is manifested to us in this world of time and space. Now what Dr. Otto's book, *The Idea of the Holy*, seems to me to suggest is that we must add to these a fourth specific element, the numinous. According to his exposition this element is first present to our consciousness through feeling, like the misery which is consequent upon a disordered liver. I have not time to discuss the question whether we can take the existence of this element as established, and I must confess that I have not yet been able to make up my mind upon that point. Whether holiness is specifically different from goodness is a question as difficult as whether sublimity is specifically different from beauty. We must remember that this element, if it exists, is an element in the rational coherence of the universe which is the object of our thought.

Bearing that in mind, we will confine ourselves to those undoubted facts of experience which Dr. Otto has brought out into the light of day, those fused emotions of wonder, awe, and fascination. What I am concerned to maintain, as a result of our discussion, is that, granting the existence of this emotional complex, we may and must submit it to rational and moral criticism, and that in two ways.

First, we must ask whether that before which we believe ourselves to be bowing in mingled wonder, awe, and fascination is worthy of our homage on grounds of rationality, goodness, or beauty. The remembrance of that Platonic discussion of courage,

which we mentioned earlier,[1] is surely enough to convince us that *mere* numinousness, the mere power to produce in us these emotions, is no sufficient ground for our consenting to them. Feelings, we have seen, can be rational or irrational, morally good or morally bad. It is possible to rest content with wondering in cases where we can and ought to be investigating, it is possible to fear what ought not to be feared, it is possible to be fascinated by quite unworthy objects; there are cases in which it is our positive duty to dispel our mystery, to conquer our fear, to master our desires. How are we to set about this purging of our emotions? Surely it can only be done by rational enquiry as to the worthiness of their objects. There is all the difference in the world between a state of fear caused by walking under a ladder or spilling the salt, and a state of fear caused by impenitence after committing some sin which really is a sin. The latter is fear in the presence of a God Who is worthy of fear on moral grounds, the former is fear in the supposed presence of a god who has no such claims to respect. The one is rational, the other is not. In this way, and in this way only, it seems to me, would it be possible to find a criterion to distinguish between what Dr. Otto would call those stimuli of the numinous emotion which are truly manifestations of the divine and those which are not, a criterion which his treatment of the subject seems, as I said in the last lecture, to require but not to provide.[2]

[1] Above, p. 20.

[2] Above, pp. 6, 10.

It may be objected that whereas a few minutes ago I stated my intention of leaving the existence of the numinous as a specific element of reality an open question, I have now put forward an argument based on the denial of such existence, seeing that the claim to criticise numinous emotion on rational and moral grounds is a claim that could not justifiably be made in questions of art. There is some force in this objection, though not so much as perhaps appears at first sight. Our discussion of what is demanded by the rational coherence of the universe as a presupposition of thought led us to see that the granting of autonomy to beauty and numinousness in their own spheres would have to be balanced by a refusal to grant them leave ultimately to contradict one another or rationality or goodness. But however much I might urge those considerations, the upholder of the numinous as a specific element might in the last resort reply that whether good or bad, rational or irrational, at any rate the numinous element just is there, the universe has within it that which is capable of producing these emotions in us, and we must recognise the fact. To this I might reply that such an argument, so far from setting forward the cause of religion, or being a help to the Christian apologist, would provide an additional difficulty in the way of believing in God, seeing that it would imply an element in the ultimate reality of which neither rationality, goodness, nor beauty could be predicated. This would mean surely the suicide both of religion and of thought. There is only one way in

which such a conclusion could be avoided. It would be necessary first to demonstrate clearly that the numinous does as a matter of fact exist as a specific element, and secondly that it is such that by its own intrinsic value it merits our devotion equally with rationality, goodness, and beauty. Now to say that it really exists and that it deserves our devotion are statements which are patient of rational criticism. Their claim to objective validity brings them within the sphere in which reason is operative, and the necessity of deciding whether such an element exists and is intrinsically valuable is the second of the two ways in which it seems to me that that emotional complex in human consciousness which has been called numinous must submit to rational criticism.

Let us now try to sum up, so far as they are relevant to our subject, the place of reason in Christian apologetics, the conclusions which may be drawn from our discussion. These may be tabulated as follows.

First, the questions with which the apologist is primarily concerned are those of the truth and rationality of belief and practice.

Secondly, feelings and actions can be rightly spoken of as rational or irrational and justified or criticised on those grounds.

Thirdly, the presupposition of thought being the rational coherence of the universe the apologist, though he may recognise that it has other characteristics besides rationality, cannot acquiesce in calling these irrational or non-rational.

Fourthly, to be indefinable or to be cognised in immediate acts of awareness are not necessarily marks of irrationality or non-rationality.

Fifthly, it is the work of the apologist to follow in the steps of belief and practice, to reflect upon them, and to ask how far the beliefs are true and the practices rational.

Sixthly, the primary and ultimate function of reason is the immediate apprehension of truth and rationality, and the triumphant conclusion of the apologist's task would be the exposition of the faith and practice of the Christian Church in such a way as to provoke the response, 'Yes, that is true and rational.' This triumphant conclusion cannot, of course, be reached until we pass from seeing in a glass darkly to knowing even as we are known; but it is the goal of the apologist's aim towards which he must strive to make what progress is possible to him in this life.

We ended our last lecture by distinguishing between the work of the converting preacher and that of the apologist. We have now gone a step further and distinguished apologetics from the faith and practice of the converted, and I would ask your attention to the relation between the two. The apologist must confine himself strictly to questions of truth and rationality, but if he is to perform his task satisfactorily it is essential that he should be as fully acquainted as possible with the beliefs and practices whose truth and rationality are in question. Is this possible to one who does not share them? I very

much doubt it, but hesitate categorically to deny that sympathetic understanding can give sufficient insight for the satisfactory prosecution of the enquiry. But I do not hesitate to assert that, in so far as sharing in beliefs and practices and the emotions associated with them increases a man's knowledge of the subject with which he has to deal, it renders him more competent to pursue the enquiry into their truth and rationality, provided that at the same time his devotion to truth is such that he is able by strict self-discipline of the mind to follow the argument whither it leads. Such a man would be the ideal apologist, and such men are needed by the Church in this and every age. Not such men alone, for it takes many differing members to form the body. The converting preacher, the large-hearted pastor, the faithful servant of Christ whose mind is untroubled by questionings, and many another, are equally valuable. But if it is the specific claim of Christian faith and practice to be true and rational, there must always be room within the Church for men whose task is to follow whither their reason leads them with unquestioned loyalty. That this is the specific claim of Christian faith and practice will be the thesis of our next lecture.

III.

OUR last lecture was devoted to an attempt to establish the position that the primary concern of the apologist is with the rationality of religion. That argument can be briefly summarised as follows. The presupposition of all thought is the rationality of the universe. To believe in God is to believe that the universe is such that personality and goodness can be predicated of it. By God we do not mean some specific element in the universe isolated and called 'divine,' but the universe as a whole, the ultimate reality. We do not wish to deny that there are other elements in the universe besides that of rationality, or other elements in religion besides the apprehension of rationality. Least of all do we wish to deny the importance in religion of that personal intercourse between the soul and God which is an experience of the whole man in which reason, will, and feeling are found, an experience far fuller, richer and deeper than any mere isolated act of intellectual apprehension of rationality. But we do wish to maintain that that experience is only justified if the object of that communion be the ultimate reality itself, that reality which in all its richness is in every element interpermeated by rationality. In other words, our religious beliefs must be assumed to have something to say about the universe, and it must be the task of the apologist to

consider whether what they say about it is true. The specific temptation of the apologist is the temptation to forsake this task, to seek to avoid the long and arduous quest for truth by following some short cut which seems to lead more easily to the commendation of his religion to his fellow men. In this lecture I hope to show that historically Christianity always has claimed to have something to say about the universe, and that therefore the Christian apologist can never be excused from the duty of considering whether what it says is true. He must continually remember that in the words of Harnack, 'if piety should suffer in the process . . . there is a stronger interest than that of piety—namely, that of truth.'

The Christian religion was the offspring of Judaism, and we need go no further than the first verse of the Book of Genesis for evidence that Judaism claimed to have something to say about the universe. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' What the Jews had to say about the universe was said in what we may call a dramatic form. For them this earth was the scene on which was being enacted, so to speak, the divine drama. God was the creator and ruler of all that is, including this earth and all upon it. Among this creation was mankind, and among mankind were the Jews, chosen by Him to be His own people, whose duty it was to serve and please Him in return for His choice. As He was holy, so they too must be holy, with a holiness which by the time of Christ was seen to involve moral righteous-

ness. For the time being God's people might suffer and be despised by the nations of the world, but in due time God would vindicate His people and establish the Kingdom of God either on this earth or in Heaven after the end of the world, sending His Messiah for the purpose of this vindication.

We should notice that whatever difference there may be in *content* of belief, in *form* this Jewish faith was precisely similar to that faith in which the Christian boy or girl is brought up. In other words, this dramatic representation of the universe is the natural mode of expression of religion. The Christian child learns from his parents and teachers to believe in God as His creator and ruler, whose predominant characteristics are righteousness and love, whom he is called to serve with responsive righteousness and love. He also learns of the atonement wrought by Christ, of the unseen presence with him of his risen Saviour, and of the power of the Holy Spirit. This, and much more, he learns which the Jew did not; but it is all in form a further elaboration of the characters and incidents in that divine drama which for the Jew as for him is the explanation of the universe.

But the religious outlook which issues in this dramatic presentation of the universe is not the only way of approaching it which is open to the mind of man. That presentation, no matter how simple and natural it may seem to the religious mind, is nevertheless the complex product of a manner of life in which a certain interpretation of the facts of existence is

an integral element in the experiencing of them.[1] Now the scientific approach to the universe, as also the philosophical, starts as it were from the other end. They start by attempting to criticise, so far as is possible, the element of interpretation, and their aim is simply in the one case to discover and use, in the other to discover and understand, the truth about the universe as it is objectively presented to the mind of man. The presuppositions, axioms, and postulates to be used in these voyages of discovery are to be as few as possible. Without some few, such as the uniformity of nature, and the necessary laws of thought, the vessel cannot put to sea at all. But the book of nature is the Bible of the man of science, and his prophets are 'fundamentalists,' for the only justifiable interpretation of any one passage is that provided by another passage in the same book. The philosopher goes deeper, for he seeks to *understand* as a whole that universe whose detailed description is the scientists' task. Religion starts with God, and interprets the experience of life on the basis of belief in Him ; philosophy starts with the experience of life, and faith in God, if reached at all, is the crowning achievement of the quest. And throughout the canon of rationality is the compass which guides the scientist and the philosopher on their journeys.

The contrast between the religious attitude on the one hand, and the scientific and the philosophical

[1] I have attempted to state this point more in detail in a paper on *Experience, Religious Experience, and Christian Experience*, published in *The Interpreter*, Vol. XIX., No. 4, and reprinted below, pp. 67 ff.

on the other, is brought home to the Christian child by his wider education and experience of life. He has been brought up to think of God as his Maker and his loving Father, who cares above all for goodness, and desires the loving response of good children, who has sent His only-begotten Son to bring forgiveness and freedom from sin to His people, and strengthens them by the gift of His Spirit. He has learned to regard himself as a member of God's Church, united to God through prayer and sacrament, and called to inherit a blessed immortality in the Kingdom of Heaven. But now he is presented with a world which at first sight has little in common with the world as he has pictured it. Human endeavour in an environment of natural law is the appearance which it now begins to wear, and whether he looks outward to the starry heavens or inwards to the depths of his own being, he learns to observe 'facts as they are,' and to trace within and without the operations of those 'laws of nature' which the sciences discover. So far from finding clear signs of the finger of a loving Father, he is impressed by the obvious indifference to moral values and human aspirations of those forces whose discovery leads to the formulation of scientific 'laws.' He is driven to reflect upon his religion, and to ask whether, in the light of his new knowledge of 'things as they are,' he can continue to believe in his religious creed as giving a true account of the Universe. He is driven, that is, to those questions whose study is the work of the Christian apologist.

The Christian Church in the days of its youth underwent an experience very similar to that of the Christian child to-day. We have seen that it was born of Judaism, and inherited that religious outlook which issues in a dramatic presentation of the universe. But without, in the Greek world, men had been approaching the universe as scientists and philosophers, not explaining the world by reference to Jehovah, its Maker and Ruler, but pondering such problems as those of the one and the many, and of being and becoming, and asking the nature of that which is ultimately real.

In the first century of our era the predominant philosophy was a scepticism which really implied a despair of success in the quest of truth. In our earlier lectures we have spoken of this world of time and space as having a sacramental reality, in which the eternal goodness, beauty and rationality are manifested in particular instances of themselves. The paradox of the relation of the universal to the particular is that although the universal is manifested in and through the particular instance of it, yet itself it transcends and cannot have ascribed to it all the predicates of the instance; as triangularity is neither isosceles, scalene, nor equilateral, so also beauty itself is neither extended on canvas nor audible through the scraping of bow on string. Now Greek thought had laid so much stress on this unlikeness of the universal to the particular that it had come to view its unlikeness to anything of which we have any experience as being the primary characteristic of the

utlimate reality. All that could be said of it was that it was not like any object of our apprehension in this world of time and space. Thus came the conception of the unknowable God, and there were not wanting those who carried this process to its logical conclusion and spoke of the ultimate reality as the οὐκ ὢν θεός —the non-existent God. Reason being thus despaired of, the religious looked for light from revelation, and the Roman Empire was flooded with a host of oriental applicants for the vacant post of revealer of the truth. Myths and legends of unfathomable antiquity, claiming to be divine revelations of that which was beyond the grasp of human reason, provided the religious needs of man with objects of worship more satisfying than the unknowable God. An excellent example of this conception of the relation between reason and revelation is to be found in Philo of Alexandria. In him flowed together the Greek and the Hebrew streams of thought, but in such a way that for him the Hebrew scriptures provided the revelation made necessary by the Greek conception of the limitations of reason. He is the direct parent of all who base their faith on the authority of an infallible Bible which is above rational criticism; he is the indirect parent of those whose oracle is an infallible Church. The dogmatic edifices of them all are founded upon the quagmire of the one really bottomless scepticism, that scepticism which denies the competence of human reason to distinguish truth and falsehood and thus to criticise that which is offered to it under the form of revelation.

Into this world of scepticism with its unknowable God came the Christian faith with its message that God was knowable and revealed in Jesus Christ. The figure of St. Paul standing at Athens upon the hill of Ares among the worshippers of the ἄγνωστος θεός, and declaring 'What . . . ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you,'[1] typifies the position of Christianity in the world of the first century. There were not wanting, of course, Christians who shared the scepticism of their contemporaries, for whom the Old Testament scriptures enriched by the addition of the story of our Lord formed a revelation to be set in contrast to the witness of human reason. There were then, there always have been, and there are to-day such Christians. But they are like those early Christians who expected an immediate and catastrophic *parousia* of Christ after the manner pictured in Jewish apocalypses; they represent, that is to say, one of those relics of pre-Christian thought which, being inconsistent with the true genius of Christianity, are gradually expelled from the Body of Christ under the leading of the Holy Spirit through the ages.

This question was settled in principle in the second and third centuries of our era by the issue of the conflict between the Catholic Church and the Gnostic sects. That conflict has many aspects, but we shall be blind to one of the most important if we fail to see in it the vindication of the rationalism of orthodox Christianity. In all its hydra-headed manifestations

[1] Acts xviii. 23.

the basis of Gnosticism was that despair of reason which led men to abandon the genuine quest of knowledge and to substitute the credulous acceptance of myth and legend. Entirely in consonance with this depreciation of human reason was their ethical creed, based on an identification of the distinction between good and evil with that between spirit and matter. In the two spheres of thought and action they denied the sacramental quality of this world in space and time, denying that truth and goodness are to be recognised and pursued by man in and through his life in the flesh. They viewed a man as a fragment of some spiritual essence imprisoned in an alien material body ; his only hope lay in his receiving the revelation which should act like a charm and set him free from his prison.

It was of course open to the orthodox Church to attempt to compete with the Gnostic sects by adopting the same sceptical premisses and claiming to be the bearers of a rival and superior revelation. There were, as we have said before, some good orthodox Catholics who did this. But when one surveys the writings of the apologists, the moral demands made of the Christian, and perhaps above all the unequivocal refusal to allow the historicity of the Gospel story to be subordinated to an allegorical significance, it is impossible not to see in the main stream of the Christian teaching a claim to have something to say about the universe, to have something to say about that same universe which is studied by the sciences and philosophy, to have

something to say which can stand trial at the bar of reason in the presence of philosopher and man of science.

In making this claim the Church was being true to its Founder. It is to be hoped that the times are passing in which eschatologists strove for the person of the historic Jesus with those who saw in Him pre-eminently the greatest moral teacher of all time. Surely they combine to shew us that the Gospels record the story of One who claimed to be Messiah come to set up the Kingdom of God, but who claimed it as representing a God whose nature was righteous love manifested in service. Not by clash of arms or miraculous appearance in the sky would He terrify men into submission. He appealed to those who had 'the single eye,' and was openly surprised that men who could profess to foretell the weather were unable to read the signs of the times.[1] Adapting the words of St. Paul we may say that He went about by the manifestation of the truth commending Himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.[2]

He claimed to be the Messiah who had come to establish the Kingdom of God. For the time being He was to fulfil the role of the suffering servant spoken of by the prophet Isaiah ; as such He was to die for the sins of mankind, and only through death to pass to the glory of the Son of Man in the clouds of Heaven. Was He a deluded fanatic who had got it into His head that He was Messiah when there is no such thing, or was the truth about Him that He was really

[1] Mt. vi. 22=Lk. xi. 34 ; Lk. xii. 56 (? Mt. xvi. 3).
[2] Cp. II. Cor. iv. 2.

Messiah and knew it? The Christian Church took Him at His word, and built its dogmatic edifice upon the foundation of that faith in Him. If He was truly Messiah, then the universe must be such that there is a place for a Messiah in its ordered wholeness. Christ had claimed Messiahship not as the bearer of some mysterious revelation, but as One whose life and teaching challenged recognition by human reason as manifestations of goodness, truth and beauty. So the Church, in proclaiming to the world its acceptance of His claim to Messiahship, challenged the verdict on the truth of its message at the bar of reason. It set itself to the task of thinking out what the acceptance of His claim would involve, and passed to the full realisation that it involves belief in Him as very God of one substance with the Father, made man, one Person in two natures. The whole fabric of the Christian creed was a rational construction, an attempt to say something about the universe without ignoring the problem presented by the appearance of Jesus Christ upon the pages of this world's history.

There was need of such a process of thought in primitive Christianity. Without realising the intellectual difficulties inherent in their religion, Christians believed their Lord to be both divine and human, and combined a monotheistic horror of idolatry with the worship of Christ as God. Here, clearly, were beliefs and practices which *prima facie* were self-contradictory and absurd. But the Church was not content to rest its claim to allegiance on its power to produce in

men subjective effects in religious experience, glorying in the non-rationality of its doctrines. It realised that only by reflection on such metaphysical questions as the nature of unity and the meaning of godhead and manhood could a religion which involved a trinitarian conception of God and a divine incarnation continue to merit and to receive the assent of thinking men. So this task was undertaken, and the Christian religion came to be expounded in the terms of rational philosophy.

I have spoken of the claim to be true and rational as being the specific claim of the Christian religion. What is meant is this. So long as one ignores that claim, and concentrates attention on the pragmatic question of the subjective religious experiences of Christians, I do not see how any valid ground can be discovered for distinguishing the Christian experience from the religious experiences of the adherents of other faiths. Assurance of freedom from sin, of immortality, of communion with God, is no peculiar possession of the Christian, and those who try to prove the superiority of Christianity to the mystery religions of the Roman Empire in the early centuries of our era by claiming for it merely a greater potency to produce such effects are building upon an insecure foundation. The only way in which the Christian apologist can distinguish the worshippers of Christ from the worshippers of the redeemer gods of the mystery religions is by exhibiting the objective difference between Him and His rivals. It is not because the Christian has subjectively a deeper ex-

perience of these things, but because Christ is in very truth God incarnate that Christianity has a claim upon our allegiance. To face this claim, to consider its rational justification is the task of the Christian apologist. It is not an easy task, but it is a task which the Christian Church cannot ignore. That the Church has not ignored it in the past the rejection of Gnosticism, the formulation of the Creeds, and the long list of the names of Christian philosophers bear witness. That the Christian Church honours among its saints Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas—to mention no more—is evidence enough that it claims to have something to say about the universe, something which it claims to be justifiable as true at the bar of reason.

As the years pass and progress is made in scientific and philosophical investigation, so the task of the Christian apologist is ever with us. Here there appears another difference between orthodox Christianity and the Gnostic sects. Those sects claimed to have a special revelation about matters of science and history, which must be accepted uncriticised as the truth which sets men free. The Philonic treatment of the Bible as such a revelation has, where admitted in the Church, caused trouble enough within living memory, as those who can remember the conflicts over what we may call Darwinianism can testify. We may be thankful for the contribution those conflicts have made to the casting out of that false conception of biblical authority, and in the issue of those conflicts we see again the Church facing

its task of testing the truth of its doctrines at the bar of reason. It was not by denying the competence of the sciences to discover the truth about the history of life on this earth, it was not by a scornful disregard of those discoveries based on a dualism which denies their importance for our conception of God, that progress was made. Our gratitude is due to those of our immediate ancestors who trod the dark and difficult ways of honest rational apologetic, in order that amidst the removing of those things that were shaken those which were not shaken might endure.

It would of course be absurd to over emphasise the importance of rational apologetic so as to depreciate unduly the value of other elements in religion. A man's religion should involve his whole life, and, as we have seen, he can act and feel as well as think, and there are other elements in reality besides pure rationality. The appeal to man's emotional nature of what has been called 'the numinous' is a thing neither to be denied nor deplored. All that is to be contested is the claim that that appeal lifts religion beyond rational criticism and justification. Such a claim was made by the reviewer of Dr. Gore's work to whom we referred at the beginning of our first lecture. A critical study of Dr. Otto's book, on which that claim was based, and a brief survey of the development of Christian thought have led us to see that such a claim cannot be allowed. It represents a standing temptation to the Christian apologist. From the days of the Gnostics and the Montanists to the present day there has never been

absent that temptation to avoid facing the crucial question: Is Christianity true? In the modern world perhaps the most famous attempt to establish Christianity while leaving that question unfaced is to be found in the work of Albrecht Ritschl. I do not wish in the least to minimise the value of the contributions made by him and by Dr. Otto to our appreciation of the richness and worth of the Christian religion; but I do wish most earnestly to contend that the question 'Is Christianity rational?' is so fundamental a question that it must be faced honestly by the Christian apologist without any attempt whatever to shift the basis of argument on to grounds other than rational. Indeed, to refer once again to the work of Dr. Gore, whose criticism gave rise to the argument of our first lecture, it is not because Dr. Gore attempts by rational argument to establish the truth of Christianity that his work is open to criticism; it is rather because he is not sufficiently thoroughgoing in his rationalism. In all his works he seems to assume a contrast between reason and revelation which is, when thought out, untenable. If human reason be, fundamentally, man's power of recognising truth and rationality presented to the mind, and if rationality be an element in that ultimate reality which for the theist is God, then in all apprehension of truth we have the interaction of revelation and reason, God revealing Himself and man apprehending the revelation. To postulate a sphere in which human reason can apprehend truth apart from God's self-revealing activity is to introduce a dualism

which contradicts the monotheism of reasonable Christian faith, and demands on the human side a view of reason which is comparable in the intellectual sphere to Pelagianism in the moral. Reason and revelation are correlative terms, denoting not contrasted methods of arriving at truth, but two complementary elements in all attainment of knowledge.[1]

To hold that God who reveals Himself in manifold ways wherever truth is discovered has also revealed Himself more directly, so to speak, to the Jewish prophets and in Jesus Christ is not to hold that where this was done reason was superseded by some other human activity. Revelation is given, of course, to the whole man, and includes the apprehension of far more than pure truth or mere rationality. A right attitude of heart and will was necessary for prophet and apostle to be able to apprehend God's message. But in so far as the prophet Amos, for example, rightly recognised the truth that if there be a God He must be righteous, or the Apostle Peter recognised the Messiah in Christ, they were rationally apprehending the revelation of God. Such immediate graspings of revelation must indeed be distinguished from later reflection upon them; but this is not a distinction between a non-rational intuition and a rational process of proof, for we saw in our first lecture that all such processes are ultimately analysable into just such immediate acts of apprehension as those of Amos and St. Peter.[2]

[1] For a fuller discussion of this point, see C. C. J. Webb, *Problems in the Relation of God and Man*. (London, Nisbet, 1911.)

[2] Above, pp. 2-5.

In the subsequent processes of reflection we test the rationality of our discoveries by viewing them in the light of all we know of the universe from other sources. To discuss this problem fully would require a discussion of the problem of error, for which there is no time here. But this much may be said, and it is sufficient for our purpose. Those immediate acts of apprehension in which a man seems to make a new discovery may, of course, turn out to be genuine discoveries of truth, or mistakes. In the first case they are genuine acts of reason rightly functioning; in the second, either the supposed discoverer was imperfectly rational in his thinking, or the mistake was due to some obscurity in the subject matter as presented to his mind. The object of the subsequent reflection is to discover whether in either or both of these ways the alleged discovery was vitiated by error. But when such reflection confirms the truth of the discovery and proclaims that here was a genuine revelation of God, it does not make rational what had hitherto been a non-rational intuition; it merely confirms the rationality of what had been in fact a rational apprehension of God's revelation all the time.

To the test of such reflection all alleged discoveries or revelations must come. If we grant this, we are enabled to enunciate an extremely important principle, that the guarantee of any alleged discovery or revelation must lie in its inherent reasonableness, and in nothing else whatsoever. A doctrine cannot be guaranteed, for example, by its source. Whether

it be proclaimed as coming from an infallible book, or an infallible church, or as a message from a departed spirit, or as revealed through gazing in a crystal, what we must scrutinise is not the source it is alleged to come from, but the doctrine itself. It is neglect of this principle which so often reduces those who depend on an infallible book or church to dire straits when confronted with startling revelations which are said to have been communicated by the spirits of the departed or directly in a vision by Christ Himself. Nor, again, can the practical appeal of a cultus be an adequate substitute for the truth of the doctrines it implies. Both the liturgical and the extra-liturgical cultus of the Blessed Sacrament, for example, must face the question of their philosophical justification, and if either be found wanting at the bar of reason, it cannot be encouraged by a Church which cares for truth, or knowingly persisted in by an individual against his reason without damage to his own soul.

There is one practical difficulty which follows from our argument to which I should like to call attention before concluding this lecture. If what has been said be true, then the Church has two duties to perform which seem to be incompatible with one another. It must somehow or other combine the proclamation of a message with the search for truth. The Church is nothing if it be not God's agent on earth proclaiming to sinful man God's message of forgiveness through Christ and life in the Spirit. But how can it proclaim this message with a trumpet-like voice of no uncertain

meaning, and yet at the same time be facing and considering the question whether that message be true when tested at the bar of reason in the light of all the growing knowledge of the universe revealed to science and philosophy? This difficulty has beset the Church through all the ages, and we are struggling with it to-day; nor do I think that any fully satisfactory solution of it is at present open to us. It is a difficulty not peculiar to the Church or to religion; but a difficulty inherent in the nature of things as they are. It is a condition of existence in this ever-changing finite world of space and time, whose relation to the eternal infinite is so baffling a mystery to philosophy. But our very finiteness may have its compensations, and enable us, while practically our difficulty *solvitur ambulando*, to wait in patience for that logical and theoretical solution which will only come when we know even as we are known. Through this finiteness it comes that there are men and women of different gifts, yet members one of another. To some is given the unquestioning faith and zeal in proclaiming the message of God, to others the ceaseless questioning and that faith which, in the words of the poet, finds expression 'in honest doubt'; and the Church is the mother of us all. Here on this earth she must walk by faith and not by sight, and so long as this is so, there is one way and one way only in which she can bear witness to the utter sincerity of conviction with which she believes her message to be true. Just because she believes it to be true, and for no other reason, she must make the venture of

faith and challenge its testing at the bar of reason. She must even nurture at her bosom and own as her sons those who are prepared to be its critics. Then, and only then, confident in the honesty of her faith, she can trumpet to the world 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'

IV

OUR first three lectures have been devoted to vindicating the claims of reason, to showing that it has a part to play in Christian apologetic which is of fundamental importance and which cannot be played by anything else. Our attention has been concentrated on the powers of reason; we have thought little of its limitations. They are important, and now demand consideration.

We have thought of human reason as the faculty in man of recognising truth or rationality presented to the mind, and that the pre-supposition of all thought is the rationality of the universe. So far as I can see, the limitations of human reason are two, and both arise from our existence as finite beings at particular times in the history of this world. The first limitation is due to the fact that we are not sufficiently rational. Historically the power of rational thought is a comparatively late acquisition of the human mind; and the practice of reflection in which we criticise the rationality of our acts of apprehension is later in origin than the making of those acts. This is true of the individual as of the race. There is always a danger of our thought being insufficiently rational. The remedy for this is, of course, education.

The second limitation arises from the complexity of the subject matter with which our reason has to deal. Although, as we have seen, we must assume the rationality of the universe if we are to think at all,

yet so far beyond the understanding of any of us is the rich complexity of reality that we have to admit, time and time again, that it passes beyond our comprehension. Here again the remedy is education. Just as a complicated problem in naval engineering may be beyond the comprehension of a beginner in mathematics, so the problem of the universe puzzles and baffles us all. But just as it is possible for that beginner step by step to acquire the knowledge necessary to enable him to deal with his problems, so we look forward to the time when we shall know even as we are known.

Then, and then only, will theology reach its goal. Meanwhile we have to walk by faith and not by sight, taking care to avoid two mistakes. The one is to call faith knowledge, to say 'we see' when we do not; the other to seek a short cut to ease our tension, substituting something else for that rational enquiry and education which alone can bring us nearer the knowledge that we seek.

This distinction between faith and knowledge is so vital to religion that a few words must be said about it. The word 'knowledge' should strictly be kept for the perfect rational apprehension of the object of thought, an apprehension of the object as a whole and in its details so clear and complete that its nature and its 'why and wherefore' are fully understood and there are no questions left to be asked. It may be objected that we have very little such knowledge, if any. True, but its *possibility* is a pre-supposition of all thought, being a corollary of that assumption

of the rationality of the universe and man's capacity to apprehend it of which we have spoken. It may be that it is a goal and an ideal rather than a present possession of mankind. All the more is it necessary to avoid confusing it with faith and claiming that the believer has it already.

Though knowledge be but a goal and an ideal, nevertheless it is the conceivable possible state of mind by reference to which alone all other states of mind such as questioning, doubt, conjecture, opinion, and belief can be understood. One and all they denote different species of that which is not knowledge. If we *knew* we should not say, 'I believe.'

The distinguishing mark of belief is surely that it is the opinion on which a man decides to act. Man is not merely an intellectual being in quest of knowledge; he has to act as well as to think, to live his life in relation to his fellow-men, the beasts, the birds, and all the furniture of earth and heaven. For this he needs principles of action. Knowledge alone could fully satisfy these needs, but that is not to be had. In default of it he must have a creed; opinions which he manifests as beliefs by basing his actions upon them, staking his life upon the truth of that which cannot be proved.

In this way there can come to all men a very real pragmatic verification or criticism of their creeds. It is not that to be true is the same as to answer in practice; but the harmony of the universe involves that that which is true shall also satisfy the test of being lived by. This method of verification is open

to all, and there are countless Christians who have learned for themselves the meaning of the words 'If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.'[1] The Christian apologist will be all the better equipped for his task if this is true of himself, and he may justly call attention to the value of the Christian faith as witnessed to in the lives of Christians. But fundamentally his work is other than this. He is aware that lives of the highest nobility and deepest devotion can be lived and have been lived as the fruit of sincere but mistaken convictions. It is for him to consider not merely the practical value but the rationality of the convictions by which he and his fellow Christians live, to be the Church's watchman in the defence of her faith against both unbelief and credulity.

I must now attempt to illustrate and justify the course of argument followed in these lectures by sketching in outline the way in which it seems to me that the principles contended for may be and should be applied by the Christian apologist. We will suppose that the question to be considered is that fundamental question for the Christian faith : 'What think ye of Christ?' : that our apologist is setting out to consider how the Catholic doctrine of the Person of Christ stands when tested at the bar of reason.

'Philosophy begins in wonder,' and our apologist will have qualified for his duty by having shared to the full that wonder which has driven him to attempt

[1] St. John viii. 32.

to understand the universe. Being an honest man, he will have recognised the fact that as yet philosophy not only begins in wonder; it also ends in wonder. Bit by bit he will have dug down into the mysteries of existence, until he is faced by that most profound and baffling of problems, the problem of the relation of time and eternity. To that problem he will realise that no man has an answer. On the one hand he sees the Bergsonians or 'progressists' maintaining that the time series is all that there is, that the universe itself if not growing better and better every day, is at any rate growing, developing, changing. These leave his questionings unsatisfied, for they cut the knot he is trying to unravel, simply denying the existence of that unchanging background whose reality is demanded by reason in order to make conceivable the fact of change.[1] On the other hand he sees the monists maintaining that only the unchanging eternal is real, that this world of changing particulars in time and space has a very doubtful status in reality. This again seems to him to cut the knot, and to be unsatisfactory in itself: unsatisfactory because it gives no reasonable ground for the existence, or the illusion of the existence, of this world in time and space at all. If the universe be perfect in its unchanging eternity, what on earth or in heaven is the point of the time series?—and yet that very time series demands the eternal unchanging perfection as the ground of its existence and intelligibility.

[1] For a fuller statement of this argument, see Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God in Recent Philosophy*, Lecture XIX. (Oxford University Press, 1917.)

When our apologist has once really faced this, the deepest puzzle of the universe, he begins to recognise how great are the limitations of our knowledge, of which we have spoken in the earlier part of this lecture. And he soon finds that the puzzle of time and eternity is by no means the only baffling mystery in the nature of things. There is also, for example, the problem of good and evil. As a philosopher he is attempting to understand the universe, and his first duty is the accurate observation of that which he is trying to understand. He finds there that he cannot ignore his moral judgments, that one of the facts he is trying to understand is the existence in this world of things which he distinguishes as those which quite rightly exist and those which ought not to be there at all.[1] As in the case of time and eternity, he finds those who attempt to cut the knot of the problem of good and evil by denying the reality of one side or the other; but their works seem to him unsatisfactory, undue simplifications of the puzzle before him. How can there exist time and eternity, good and evil in that universe whose rational coherence is the pre-supposition of his own and all thought? He turns away disappointed from one after another of the solutions offered him, until at last he stands bowed in reverence in the presence of the mystery, as when the voices of his friends ceased and Job stood in the presence of God.

Then he begins to have some respect for the

[1] For a fuller statement of this point see Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*.

Christian faith, for he realises that the greatness of the Christian faith is simply this, that it has got the problems of the universe inside it. It is useless and absurd to pretend that there are no difficulties in the Christian faith. It bristles with them. But it is of the highest importance to recognise the fact that the *real* difficulties of Christianity are not peculiar to Christianity, but are difficulties in the nature of things, difficulties which face the secular philosopher equally with the Christian believer. Faced by the difficulties of the doctrines of the Trinity, of Creation, of Incarnation, of Atonement, the Christian may be tempted to renounce the lot at the supposed call of reason. But let him remember that he will not abolish his difficulties by abolishing his Christianity. In place of the doctrine of Creation he will have to face the problem of time and eternity; in place of the doctrine of the Atonement he will have to face the problem of the relation of good and evil; in place of the doctrine of the Incarnation he will have to face the historical fact of Christ. On the other hand, let not the Christian believer think that he will necessarily improve his Creed by simplifying it and removing its difficult and mysterious elements. Both those who abandon their Christianity on account of its difficulties, and those who attempt unduly to simplify it are victims of the same illusion. They think that there is open to the mind of man a simple and satisfactory explanation of the deepest puzzles of the universe. In this they shew but the shallowness of their own appreciation of those puzzles.

Our apologist will not make either of these mistakes, but will fully realise that if he is to believe in God at all, his doctrine of God can be no simple and easy one, it must be adequate to this universe in which are found the puzzles of time and eternity, of good and evil, and many another. He will have reflected as deeply as he can on the problem of good and evil, and will have seen the reasonableness of the main principle involved in the Christian doctrine of the Atonement, that in the face of the evil which rears its head in the time series, God should take it upon Himself to vindicate goodness and neutralise the power of evil. In its message that God has done this, Christianity minimises neither the primacy of goodness, nor the reality and seriousness of evil, nor the importance of discovering a relation between them which shall explain their co-existence in a rational universe, all of which three things are demanded by reason.

So, sooner or later, our apologist will have faced the claims of what we are accustomed to call the Christian revelation of God's activity in history. For him there can be no ' special revelation ' which is *formally* other than that self-revelation of God which is involved in any discovery of truth.[1] What a scientist has seen through the microscope and what he has deduced therefrom, what a prophet has seen through the eyes of the spirit and what he has deduced therefrom, these are samples of what claim to be rational apprehensions of reality by the human mind. So far as it is possible in any one life, he has to consider all the

[1] See above, pp. 45-6.

aspects of reality which have been presented to the mind of man. In trying to do this he cannot neglect the study of history, and in studying history he must face the fact of Christ. He will therefore have done his best to make himself acquainted with the progress of the literary and historical criticism of the Bible, and especially of the Gospels and other documents dealing with the life of Christ.

Here he will have been impressed with the fact that there are two main divisions into which fall the attempts to account for the existence among the world's historical documents of the records of the human life of Christ. On the one hand there is the traditional teaching of the Christian Church which maintains that they record the life on earth of God made man, of that Second Person of the Blessed Trinity 'who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven and was incarnate.' On the other hand there are a multitude of conflicting theories all based on one premise: that, this conception of an incarnation of God being irrational and absurd, some other explanation must be found to account for the form in which the records of the life of Jesus of Nazareth have come down to us; there must have been a merely human historic Jesus, of whose life the accurate accounts have been overlaid by the views concerning Him which came to prevail among His over-enthusiastic and superstitious followers.

Among the many more or less important attempts to disentangle the truth about this postulated historic Jesus, our apologist will have noticed the emergence

during the last hundred or so years of New Testament study of two main schools of thought. First there was the school which looked upon Jesus as the greatest of all moral teachers, but one who made no claims Himself to be more than human, let alone divine. Where these seem to occur in the Gospel story, they are due to the fathering upon Him of beliefs which later came to be held by His followers. But secondly he will have noticed that other and contrasted school of students which owes so much to the impetus given by Dr. Albrecht Schweitzer, that school which lays stress chiefly on those passages in the Gospel which the former school dismissed most readily as unhistorical, which sees in Jesus a fanatic who had got it into His head that He was the expected Messiah come to herald the end of the world and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and which discounts His moral teaching as merely an *interimsethik*, advice given in view of the mistaken belief that only a few more years should roll before the catastrophic dissolution of this planet and the Day of Judgement.

Our apologist will have followed to the best of his ability the discussions between these two schools, and will have tried to study the New Testament for himself in the light of those discussions. He will have discovered the value of the contribution made by the second, or eschatological school, and there will gradually have grown up in his mind the conviction that the historic Jesus was One who did indeed claim to be the expected Messiah, but who thought of Himself as called to fulfil the role of the Suffering

Servant of Jehovah prophesied by Isaiah, to die for the sins of mankind, and only through death to pass to victory, to the seeing of the travail of His soul and being satisfied, and to the glory of the Son of Man who should be the Judge of the world. But he will not have been able to dismiss the claims of that other school who saw in Christ the greatest moral teacher of all time. On the contrary, he will have seen that the Messianic conceptions of Jesus Christ were through and through controlled by his moral convictions, that it was *as representing a God whose fundamental characteristics were righteousness and love* in a world where victory over sin was the only thing worth living and dying for that He claimed to be Messiah.

As his studies have proceeded, our apologist will have become more and more impressed by two facts about the Gospels. In the first place, he will have remembered that according to the traditional Christian view of them they are the record of the life on earth of God made Man in the days of His humiliation, when His godhead was veiled. He will have realised that on that interpretation it would not, therefore, be surprising if in these days of His humiliation that godhead was not apparent and was not recognised by His contemporaries, even among His followers. The Christian tradition is that He rose from the dead, and that only in the light of their experiences after the resurrection did Christians come to see the implications of what had gone before. If, therefore, we now isolate the Gospels from the rest of the New Testament

and demand that in them shall be found clear evidence of the godhead of our Lord, we are demanding that which on the traditional Christian hypothesis it is impossible to find and absurd to demand. But, secondly, our apologist will have become more and more convinced that the character of the historic Jesus is one which it is impossible adequately to explain and account for as representing any known type of merely human personality. It is not merely that many of the attempts to do so only attain any measure of success by ignoring elements in the record of His life and teaching which they are unable to assimilate. It is because the attempt to arrive at the true Jesus of history presents a character of a certain complexity which passes beyond his comprehension, the character of One in whose teaching and life our apologist finds his moral ideals anticipated in actuality, but who nevertheless proclaims as the kernel of His message such supernatural conceptions as the advent of a Messiah sent by God to die for mankind and return in judgement. The moral and eschatological elements are warp and woof of the seamless fabric of the teaching of Christ. Are we to conclude that we have found our moral ideal in a deluded fanatic who thought Himself Messiah, whereas in reality there could be and can be no such thing; or is it possible that He who thought of Himself as Messiah really was so, and has died and risen again and is to be our Judge?

The traditional Christian doctrine about Christ resulted from accepting this latter alternative, taking

Him at His word, and working out in the sphere of metaphysics by rational methods what was involved in so doing. To put the matter as briefly as possible, it was seen that if He had indeed brought atonement to a sinful world, then He had performed a work which could only be performed by God. But of the reality of His manhood history allowed no doubt. So in the course of some four or five centuries came the formulation of that doctrine which speaks of Him as two natures in one Person, and sees in the Gospels the record of the life on earth of God incarnate.

At this point our apologist will remember those two mysteries which he has found inherent in the nature of things when he attempted to understand the universe, the mystery of time and eternity, and the mystery of good and evil, and he will ask how the historic figure of Jesus Christ will appear in the light of these two mysteries. This will lead him to realise two things. First, he will realise that the problem of that historic Figure is remarkably akin to the problem of time and eternity. There, concentrated upon one Person and in one life, he finds mirrored the deepest mystery of the universe. If indeed the Christian Church were right, and that Person were God incarnate, then there is explained the mystery of that Figure which has so baffled successive attempts to explain it. If God were indeed to have become incarnate, would not the result have been just such as that life which the Gospels record and which passes our comprehension, a life whereon is focussed and concentrated the profoundest mystery of the universe?

And, secondly, if he accepts that Christian belief in which the empirical facts of history dovetail into the philosopher's apprehension of the problem of the universe, he will realise that he is putting his faith in a doctrine which is not inadequate to that other problem of good and evil. To see in Christ God reconciling the world to Himself is a first step towards being able to reconcile in thought the existence of those two with the rational coherence of the universe.

So, summing it all up, our apologist will decide that it is rational to stake his life upon the belief that Christ is God incarnate, and, against the background of the puzzle of the universe, will formulate the four fold foundation on which his faith will stand.

1. The fact of the contrast of goodness and evil demands belief in a God who takes it upon Himself to make atonement for sin.

2. In the Gospels we have an historical record of One who claimed to be the Servant of Jehovah come to give His life for the sins of mankind, and whose claim has been justified by the experience of the Christian Church.

3. In His teaching and in His own life He fulfils our moral ideals, our apprehension of what ought to be.

4. That historical Figure is a mystery: how to distinguish and understand the relation of divine and human in Him is beyond us. But the mystery is, as it were, a concentration of the ultimate mystery of the universe, the puzzle of time and eternity.

When we come to the historic Figure of Jesus Christ,

by careful sifting of our documents and study of His times, we arrive at a Figure which passes beyond our comprehension. All attempted 'explanations' of Him fall short of the reality they attempt to explain. All we can say is that His recorded words and actions are natural and intelligible if He were God made man. But in His manhood He can be known, served, worshipped and loved, and as He unites us with Himself we learn to say with St. Thomas, 'My Lord and my God,' and to find the blessings of those who have not seen and yet have believed. It is foolish to say, 'we see' when we do not, and it is well to remember that what the deepest thoughts of the greatest minds bring us to is an appreciation of the puzzles of the universe, for whose solution we must wait till 'we know even as we are known.' So let me close these lectures by praying, on my own behalf and on yours, in the words of St. Paul, that we may come 'unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that we may know the mystery of God, even Christ.'

Experience, Religious Experience, and Christian Experience.[1]

I HAVE been asked in the first place to consider 'experience' in general, and I think we should remind ourselves at the outset that the study of experience is always a secondary study. It involves reflection. The primary object of our interest is the world around us. The hands, and later the toes, and after that the toys which keep a child amused, are all alike parts of its environment. In both the child and the race self-consciousness is a comparatively late development, and, thank heaven, the oldest of us can retain to the end something of that objectivity of interest which is characteristic of earliest childhood; the old botanist and the old mathematician can by the grace of God be interested not in themselves, but in plants and in curves. Only when the mind turns back upon itself in reflection and philosophers and psychologists begin to ask their tiresome questions, does the study of experience begin. So, too, the saint is conscious primarily of God, and the study of his religious experience is a secondary study in which he may have little or no interest at all. Happy indeed for him if he has none!

We shall do well at the outset of our Conference to remind ourselves of this secondary character of the study of experience, and, since to be forewarned is

[1] The opening paper read at the Joint Conference of the Anglican and Free Church Fellowships in April, 1923.

to be forearmed, to warn ourselves of a possible danger inherent in this study—the danger of becoming over-introspective, and of ceasing to think directly and deeply about God, sin, and redemption, because we are wholly occupied with our own religious experiences. I sometimes think that Miss Evelyn Underhill is a writer whose works lead us into danger in this way. I am not at all convinced of the truth of her main thesis, that it is open to us all to share the experiences of the mystics : still less am I convinced that by studying those experiences and striving to have similar ones we shall achieve that end. Here I should like to mention a book by another woman writer whose insight seems to me to be deep and true, a novel which well illustrates the points that I think Miss Underhill overlooks. In *Green Apple Harvest* Miss Sheila Kaye Smith gives a penetrating study of two types of religious experience in two brothers. In Bob you have the mystic saint, in Clem the saint of more ordinary parts and passions. Now I do not believe that Clem could ever have shared the mystic experience of Bob, nor that either of these would have been what they were had they been students of ' religious experience.' Clem's study was the kindly service of those around him, Bob's soul was athirst for the living God, and could find no rest until it rested in Him.

But the philosopher can no longer be restrained from interrupting with his questions. ' Excuse me,' he has been trying to say for some minutes, ' are you not taking for granted what is very questionable,

that there are truths about God, sin, and redemption *et hoc genus omne*, which remain what they are apart from the experience of them which men have ? Have we not learned since the time of Kant that the way in which we experience anything depends upon not merely the nature of the thing itself, but the mind with which we apprehend it ? Thus the artist may only see beauty where the farmer sees but ground that looks suitable for the plough, and the soldier nothing but a number of tactical problems. Each of us has his own world that he lives in. We know nothing, and can know nothing, of God as He is in Himself, but only of what men have told us of their experiences of God. Is not then the study of religious experience, so far from being a secondary study, the one and only way in which we can approach the thought of God ? ' Such reasoning is referred to by two of the younger Oxford scientists in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*.[1] It is explicitly accepted with due acknowledgment to Kant by Dr. J. S. Haldane, while Mr. Julian Huxley says ' The need for some external, ascertainable basis for belief . . . is leading the representatives of Christianity to lay even greater stress upon the reality and pragmatic value of religious experience, less and less upon dogmas and creeds.'

Now clearly to deal adequately with this question would require that not merely the whole of this paper but that the whole of this Conference should be devoted to the discussion of the philosophical problem of the

[1] April, 1923.

theory of knowledge. All I can say here is that, for myself, I believe the acceptance of this distinction between God as He is in Himself and God as He can be known entirely misrepresents the activity of human reason, cuts at the roots of human thought in science and religion, and must lead ultimately not to a basis for belief, but to a bottomless scepticism. I can only account for its unquestioning adoption by the two scientists I have referred to by the fact that the growing specialisation in our labours has tended to hinder those who are devoted to the study of natural science from familiarity with the progress of philosophical enquiry, so that they are unfamiliar with the manner in which that particular element in the Kantian system has been undermined by later philosophical criticism.[1] Having said that, I would ask you now to approach with me the main subject of our thought, and to ask just what we mean by this word 'experience.'

There was a certain famous editor of *The Times* who strongly objected to his journalists making use of the phrase 'took place.' It was evidence, he said, of looseness of thought, of a laziness which would not trouble to find the appropriate verb for each event. They should have said that a race was run, or a meeting held, or a marriage solemnised. The word 'experience' is similarly a conveniently vague term which will cover a multitude of different kinds of experiences. Our first duty, then, must be to recog-

[1] Cf., e.g., Mr. Prichard's *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*. (Clarendon Press, 1909.)

nise this fact, and to ask what these different things have in common that one word should come to be used for all. Now to have an experience may mean to think, and in thinking—to doubt, to question, to believe, to know; or to feel—to love or to hate, or to have toothache or to eat a meringue; or to act—to get up or to go to bed, or to go for a walk, or to read a paper, or to listen to a paper. But in all these, if we are to have an experience, we must be conscious—consciousness is the common element in all which makes them experiences. An unconscious experience is a contradiction in terms. Only a conscious being can have an experience, and an experience is an event in a conscious life. So to experience is to be conscious.

To be conscious we must be conscious of something. We are never conscious without there being some content of our consciousness. Now the content of our consciousness may be something purely subjective, such as a feeling or a taste; or it may be something objective, as when we apprehend a truth or a duty. It is the latter of these that we are to think about now, the states of consciousness in which men claim to be in touch with a reality existing independently of themselves, of which they are conscious.

In every such experience there must be two elements: the conscious subject of the experience, and that which is experienced. The word 'experience' is used for the whole, but when we desire to study experiences and to distinguish different kinds of experience, we must remember that they can be

differentiated in respect to either element. Experiences may differ on the subjective side, as being different forms of activity on the part of the subject, e.g. believing, doubting, being convinced of, loving, hating, devoting oneself, etc. Or they may differ on the objective side, as being experiences of temptation, of encouragement, of the presence of God, of the power of Christ, etc.

That is all I shall say about experience in general, by way of introduction to religious experience and Christian experience. Two main points have emerged. First, that we must beware of using the word 'experience' as a conveniently vague expression to avoid the trouble of accurately determining what kind of experience we are dealing with, determining it both on the subjective and on the objective side. Secondly, we see that we cannot substitute the study of experience for that of metaphysics, since to study an experience on its objective side must include the study of what is experienced, which includes among other things the subject matter of metaphysical enquiry. If this be so, 'to lay stress,' as Mr. Huxley puts it, 'on the reality and pragmatic value of religious experience rather than on dogmas and creeds,' so far from leading to 'some external, ascertainable basis for belief,' is a counsel of despair, a counsel involving a scepticism which despairs of the possibility of apprehending truth and formulating it in dogma or creed.

Religious Experience.

From what has been said, it might seem at first sight that it would be quite easy to define religious experience. All we have to do is to ask on the one hand what objects of experience are religious objects, and on the other, what activities of our consciousness are religious activities. But the matter is not so simple, for in an actual experience there is such a fusion of subjective and objective that the separation of them according to the demands of logic is by no means easy. There is here a truth borne witness to by that distinction between God as He is and God as He is known, to which I have referred—a truth which we must not deny in rejecting that distinction as it has been drawn. This will become clearer as we go on.

Let us suggest to begin with that on the objective side what we mean by religious experience is experience of God. Now the difficulty is, that whether or no a particular experience is an experience of God depends largely on the subjective element. In the Bible there are many accounts of men who looked on dreams as messages from God. To-day there are many men who would leave God out of the explanation of such events, and explain them in psychological terms. Again, one man might find God speaking to him in an illness, while another might explain his disease by natural causes and attach to it no religious significance. It would seem, then, that commonly it is not the objective thing experienced that is religious: the religious character is attached to it in the experience by the interpretation given to it by the subject of

the experience. We might be inclined here to formulate a rule, and say that the same experience occurring to different persons may be taken differently. It would be more accurate to say that the experiences are not the same, but that in two experiences, while the objective element may be the same, differences due to the subject may cause the one experience to be religious while the other is not. What makes an experience religious is the way in which it is taken by the subject. Thus to St. Paul stripes, stones, shipwrecks, and thorns in the flesh were religious experiences, while to Judas Iscariot the daily companionship of Jesus of Nazareth was not.

It is, then, to the *interpretation* by the subject of the objective element in his experiences that our attention must be directed. I believe this to be extremely important in considering the formulation of Christian doctrine. Think, for instance, of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. I do not suppose that the experiences which befell the early Christians in New Testament times were, on the objective side, different from occurrences to-day. Only they were interpretated on the basis of a belief in the activity of the Spirit of God. That belief fused with the objective element to form a single hardly analysable experience of the power of the Spirit.

It is, I say, the *interpretation* to which our attention must be directed. Now that interpretation will depend on our general outlook on things, our *weltanschauung*, or view of the universe. Now we can come to real grips with the question whether there must be a

distinction between God as He is in Himself, and God as He is experienced, whether it is impossible to pass from the small world of our own experiences to the apprehension of reality, whether we can only say 'I experience God as Love,' and never 'God *is* Love.'

Now the very fact that we discuss things at all implies the presupposition that we are not each shut up within the world of his or her experiences, but that truth is attainable. Were human minds incapable of achieving any knowledge of God as He is, attendance at this Conference would be a waste of time and money. How are we to avoid this, seeing that God's manifestation of Himself is at the mercy, so to speak, of the interpretation put upon it by those who receive it in their experience? How can we take precautions against misinterpreting the truth in the process of apprehending it?

We interpret our experiences in the light of our general conceptions, of our creed. Now, to state baldly what should properly be argued at length, I believe that the proper function of our powers of reason and conscience is just to see through and pass beyond what is particular and temporal in our experiences and to lay hold on what is general and eternal, on what is true. What we have to see to is that the creed in the light of which we interpret the objective element in our experiences is formed by reason and conscience. I can see no hope, except in trusting reason, conscience and aesthetic judgement —the threefold facets of the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

There is, of course, the difficulty that we seem to be moving in a circle. The experiences are directed by the general conception, while that general conception itself is formed from particular experiences. True, but is not that the case with all thought ? The ' laws' of science are generalisations from particular observed events, but the events are explained and understood scientifically in the light of the ' laws.' Again, what of our conception of the Christ of the Gospels ? That is built up of particular incidents ; but each incident is interpreted in the light of the general conception. Why else should we not look on the cursing of the barren fig-tree as a discreditable exhibition of bad temper ? To cut a long story short, what I have to say here is this. Religious experience is the experience of life as experienced by men who are religious, i.e. who interpret life on the basis of belief in God. Whether or no that interpretation is justifiable depends on whether it is reasonable to believe in God. We all know what it is to discuss whether belief in God is reasonable. Just such discussion, carried to a positive conclusion, is the only possible way of reaching ' some external, ascertainable basis of belief.' Without it, no amount of stress laid on ' the reality and pragmatic value of religious experience ' will avail. It is interesting that Mr. Julian Huxley, after the statement which I have ventured to criticise, goes on very happily not to lay stress on ' the reality and pragmatic value of religious experience,' but to develop just such a reasonable argument for belief in God as I hold to be necessary to justify religious

experience. What is wanted, then, is not the substitution of appeals to religious experience for dogmas and creeds, but reasonable dogmas and creeds to interpret life, and so to produce religious experience.

I do not wish to say that it is the duty of every man and woman to be thinking out the reasonableness of their beliefs. We are not all called to this duty, and many will always adopt unquestioning the outlook in the light of which they interpret and experience life. But some are called to this task, and the importance and responsibility of their work is seen when we reflect that they do as a matter of fact largely determine the form in which their brothers and sisters will experience God's manifestation of Himself. And the Church, which provides a creed in order to enable the experiences of her members to be religious experiences, must take care that she guides the footsteps of her children by the light of the lamp of truth.

Religious experience, then, is the experience of life as experienced by men who are religious, i.e. who interpret life on the basis of belief in God. Of course even such men will distinguish between experiences which seem more or less religious in a narrower sense. St. Paul, no doubt, might speak of the meeting with Christ on the road to Damascus as a 'religious experience' of another order from the meeting with St. Luke at Troas. But we are bidden by our Lord to remember that, inasmuch as we have fed or visited the hungry and imprisoned, we have fed and visited Him. May not these distinctions be due to the imperfections of our saintliness? Our

eyes are holden so that we cannot behold the omnipresent God, and do not see 'every bush aflame with God.'

Is religious experience justifiable? Only, I have said, when discussion of the reasonableness of belief in God has come to a positive conclusion. This is a hard saying, for it will not be so till we have been long dead, when philosophy reaches its goal and we know even as we are known. But now we see through a glass darkly; we must walk by faith and not by sight. What does this mean? Finding grounds for thinking that belief in God is not unreasonable, we make the venture of faith of determining to see in all that happens to us the finger of God. As we listen for His voice, we hear it, and that which begins as a venture of faith becomes through growing experience of life a conviction which no argument has power to disturb.

Christian Experience.

If religious experience is the experience of life as experienced by men who are religious, then Christian experience will be the experience of life as experienced by men who are Christians. The same objective elements being presented to them as to others, the fact of their interpreting them in the light of the Christian faith will colour all their experience. If we turn back to the New Testament, we find there that this element of interpretation has to be taken into account. The same Christ appeared to multitudes of Jews; He preached the Gospel of repentance, of

the love and of the forgiveness of the Divine Father through His self-sacrifice ; of the power of the Spirit. Some accepted Him as Messiah, their acceptance of Him being largely coloured by eschatological conceptions ; some perhaps accepted Him on the ground of His miracles ; some on more ethical grounds ; some rejected Him and could see in Him no more than a man beside Himself, an insane fanatic. In the Fourth Gospel Christ is represented as insisting on this element of interpretation ; it was because they did not know the Father as the prophets of old had declared Him, and as their own consciences bore witness to Him, that they could not recognise the revelation of the Father in the Son. So, too, in the Synoptic Gospels great stress is laid on the importance of ' the single eye,' and it is to ' those who have ears to hear ' that Christ looks for the understanding of His message.

Now from one point of view I do not see why there should be any specific Christian experience at all. If God is what Christians believe Him to be, the loving righteous Father who forgives His erring children and enables them to serve Him aright in building the Kingdom of God, I do not see why men of other religions should not from time to time lay hold on this truth, and, in the light of it, experience the call to righteousness, the joy of forgiveness and the power of the Spirit. But, nevertheless, it was through Christ that, generally speaking, mankind has laid hold on the manifestation of God's character as at once righteous, redeeming and inspiring, and, more-

over, I do not think that it is reasonable to believe that God is what Christians believe Him to be unless we see in Christ God Himself making atonement for the sins of men. An optimistic view of the universe seems to me to be at the best a pious hope, unless in the death and resurrection of Christ we see God Himself dealing with sin in the way of love which is atonement.

If religious experience is the finding of God in all the circumstances of life, Christian experience will be the finding of The God who is revealed in Christ; still more, the walking in the Spirit, so that one can say: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ in me.' The non-Christian will find Christ never and nowhere; the Christian neophyte sometimes and in some things; the saint at all times and in all things.

Here, again, I find a difficulty in speaking of a specific Christian experience, for in Christ is the ideal of every man, and just as the fertility of the divine mind is shewn in the infinite variety of individual selves whom He calls into existence, so Christ will be revealed in an infinite variety of manifestations. If God does not wish us all to be exactly alike, after the manner of the standardised products which are the pride of our modern factory system, but each an individual self, like the works on each of which is lavished the loving care of the craftsman, then in the ideal which each of us finds held up before himself, and in all that encourages and enables him to attain it, Christ will be found as the revelation of God working in man by the power of the Spirit. So each

of us has his own besetting sin and his own individual redemption, for faithlessness to that ideal is the sin of sins, and freedom to lay hold on it is the fruit of redemption. But how can artist and moralist, philosopher and man of action share all in one precisely similar 'specific Christian experience'? All may join in saying such prayers as the seventy-first psalm to the ideals of beauty, truth, goodness or noble endeavour which it is sin to betray, but the manner in which the God who forgives and enables is laid hold on in experience may be infinitely various.

Here we find the real value of the study of religious and Christian experience, or rather experiences. It prevents our becoming shut up to the narrowness of believing that only in this or that way does God reveal Himself to man. The wise priest must be ready to counsel a multitude of persons, and enable them in the multifarious events of life to hear the voice of God, and the laity too will do well to share in this priestly broad-mindedness.

But how, in all this, if the revelation of God in Christ in human experience be so infinitely various, can we find the common element, the unity, which justifies us in giving to all these experiences the common name of Christian? The question reminds us of that which troubled the early Christians, who were puzzled to know which spirits were to be trusted, and were told in the first Epistle of St. John to listen to those who acknowledged Jesus Christ. So for us it is the historic figure of the Christ of the Gospels that is to be the controlling element in our experience. It

is a wonder of the Incarnation to which attention has been drawn more than once by Father Kelly, that in the Christ of the Gospels we have the one historic Figure which is able, as a matter of fact, to make a universal appeal. Judging *a priori*, we might be inclined to think this impossible, but such judgement is ruled out by the empirical fact to which Father Kelly, with his wide knowledge of the Church in the Mission Field, bears witness. All other heroes of history may make but a limited appeal, appealing to some race or type of men, but in Christ all nations and peoples, and all manner of men and women among them, have found their ideal.

Christian experience, then, is controlled by being related to the historic Christ of the Gospels. It is the experience of life as experienced by men who are Christians, i.e. who interpret life on the basis of belief in Jesus of Nazareth as their God, who in the power of the Spirit find in every circumstance some new revelation of God in Christ. Here is the point of the Christian faith, of the dogmas and creeds of the Church. Such experience is only justifiable if the belief which gives rise to it is a true belief, and hence we see that the thought of the Church in the first centuries, the centuries in which the dogmas and creeds of the Church were being formulated, moved in the realm of metaphysics, and was attempting to state belief in Christ in the form of a reasonable view of the universe, expressed in the philosophical language of the day. The essential teaching of the Christian creeds is just these two points, that Christ

is God, and that the Christ who is God is the historical Jesus of Nazareth. This is the core of the Christian *weltanschauung*, or view of the universe, in the light of which Christians interpret all that happens to them in their lives, which thus makes their experience of life Christian experience.

I very much doubt, if I may say so, if a common ground for the reunion of Christendom can ever be found by the search for a single common specific Christian experience. A single Christian faith, and agreement to unite in fellowship in the common practice of Christian worship on the basis of that faith, seem to me to be aims for which, as being possible though yet far off, it is reasonable to strive. But when we are united in faith and worship, I think we should set no bounds to the possible variety of Christian experiences, but should endeavour to learn from one another of the infinite richness of the mercies of God in Christ Jesus vouchsafed to all sorts and conditions of men. It is encouraging to me to find that here I have been anticipated by those who have drawn up our official programme for this Conference. 'The Specific Character of the Christian Experience,' they say, 'will be found in the Christian *conception*,' —in the views of God and man, that is,—'which Christians hold.'

Is Christian experience justifiable? That will depend on the truth of the Christian view of the universe, of the Christian faith. All that I said, when dealing with religious experience in general, about the need of thought, and in default of such demon-

strative proof as only perfect knowledge of all things could give, of the venture of reasonable faith which deepens into conviction, I would say again here with special reference to Christian belief and practice and experience. But let me end with a parable.

A certain duke is said to have remarked: 'The other day I dreamed that I was on my feet addressing my brother peers in the House of Lords, and when I woke up I found that I *was* addressing my brother peers in the House of Lords.' Now there are those to-day who assure us that the Christian faith is a fantasy, as it were a dream-projection of our unconscious selves. But perhaps to us dreamers, who in this life dream that we walk in the presence of the Blessed Trinity with the comradeship of the saints and angels, death will be the awakening to find that we are indeed walking in the company of angels and saints, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

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